



Rabies Virus

- Rabies is a fatal zoonotic disease of man and other mammals. The dog and cat are high risk species for the transmission of the virus to man.
- The dog is considered the primary reservoir for rabies virus. Cat-to-cat transmission is rare and most cases of feline rabies are believed to have originated from dogs or wildlife.
- Rabies virus is almost always transmitted through saliva via a bite or other skin wound.
- Cats are more resistant to some strains of rabies virus, but not all strains when compared to the dog. Also, age related resistance to rabies is shown for the cat, but not the dog. The cat becomes a more important source of rabies virus for man where rabies is well controlled in the dog by vaccination.
- Both the dog and the cat can develop the furious (hyperexcitable) or dumb (paralysis) form of rabies. Pharyngeal and jaw paralysis is one of the cardinal signs of rabies.
- Whenever possible, non-adjuvanted rabies vaccines should be used in the cat to reduce the risk of development of injection site sarcoma. However, many countries have only adjuvanted vaccines available.
- Whenever possible, and especially in areas where rabies is prevalent, every effort must be made to vaccinate as many dogs and cats as possible with vaccines capable of providing a minimum of 3 years duration of immunity.
- Rabies is a vaccine preventable disease!

Early pharyngeal paralysis



Photo: LE Carmichael

Complete paralysis, opisthotonus



Photo: LE Carmichael

Drooling, difficult swallowing

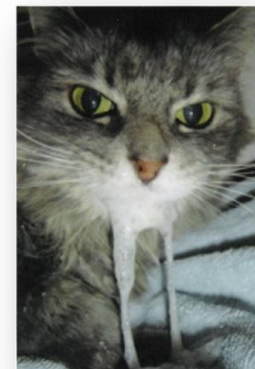


Photo: RD Schultz, LJ Larson